



Ohio Community Action Food Stamp Challenge April 30-May 4, 2012

What is the Ohio Community Action Food Stamp Challenge?

In 2011, 1.75 million Ohioans received food assistance benefits, more commonly known as food stamps. Ohio's Community Action Agencies are initiating a Food Stamp Challenge April 30-May 4 in honor of Community Action Month to give participants a view of what life can be like for these low-income Ohioans.

During the Challenge, participants will limit their total food purchases to the weekly budget of a typical food stamp recipient. The goal of the Challenge is to increase awareness around poverty and hunger in Ohio by facilitating a meaningful personal experience for participants. While living on a food stamp budget for just one week cannot come close to the struggles encountered by low-income families week after week and month after month, it does provide those who take the Challenge with a new perspective and greater understanding.

What is the amount of the Food Stamp Challenge food budget?

In 2011, the average individual food stamp recipient received \$140 per month in food assistance benefits, which equates to \$32.31 per week, \$4.62 per day or \$1.54 per meal. For the Challenge, which is only five days instead of a seven day week, we ask participants to limit their food purchases to **\$23 for the week**. Your friends and family can join in the Challenge with you. Each individual has \$23 to spend on food for the week. Please take into consideration any medical conditions of participants before agreeing to do the Challenge.

While food stamps are meant to supplement a recipients' food budget, after paying for housing, energy and healthcare expenses, many low-income households have little or no money remaining to spend on food. In addition, most food stamp households report that their food stamp benefits do not last the entire month and many are forced to turn to food pantries and soup kitchens. Spending only the allotted \$23 will show participants how well they would fare living on a limited food stamp budget.

What items can I purchase with my \$23 during the Food Stamp Challenge?

Challenge participants should spend their food stamp budget of \$23 only on items eligible for purchase through the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. As per USDA guidelines:

You CAN use SNAP benefits to buy foods for the household to eat, such as breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, and dairy products. You can also buy seeds and plants that produce food for the household to eat.

You CANNOT use SNAP Benefits to buy beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes or tobacco; any nonfood items, such as pet foods, soaps, paper products and household supplies; vitamins and medicines; food that will be eaten in the store; and hot foods.

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How can I participate in the Ohio Community Action Food Stamp Challenge?

1. [Click here to register](#) for the Food Stamp Challenge by April 27
2. **Purchase food and beverages** using your Challenge budget of \$23 during the week of April 30-May 4. All food purchased and eaten during the Challenge week, including fast food and dining out, should be included in the total spending.

See our blog (<http://ohcafoodstampchallenge.blogspot.com>) for food buying guidelines and tips, as well as the USDA's My Plate nutritional guidelines.

3. **Try to eat only the food purchased** for the Challenge with your food stamp budget during the week. Avoid consuming food that you already own (this does not include spices or condiments) or accepting free food from family, friends, or at work or social gatherings.
4. **Contribute to the blog** by sending entries describing how the Challenge is going to you or video diaries to info@oacaa.org (see ideas for blog entries on the What to Blog About page of the Challenge blog) and follow the blog to see how other participants are doing.
5. **Spread the word** about your experience on your Twitter and Facebook accounts or on Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies' Facebook page.

Please note, if you do not have enough money for the week, you should NOT seek assistance from food pantries, food banks or soup kitchens.